

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 413  
By Burchett

A RESOLUTION to honor and commend the Historic Tennessee Theatre Foundation on the preservation of the Tennessee Theatre.

WHEREAS, Tennesseans take great pride in the history of our beloved State, and it is fitting that the members of this General Assembly should recognize those notable communities that preserve and restore local buildings and facilities that are a significant part of the heritage of the great State of Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, opening its doors on October 1, 1928, the Tennessee Theatre in Knoxville was the elegant epitome of a movie palace, making all who entered feel like royalty as they enjoyed the city's premier entertainment destination. For the next fifty years, generations of local patrons would see top-flight movies, musical showcases and extravaganzas of all sorts at the downtown location; and

WHEREAS, falling on hard times in the early 1970s with the advent of multi-screen cinemas in the suburbs, the Tennessee Theatre faced an uncertain future like many of her fellow downtown movie palaces across the country. One of only eight Spanish-Moorish style theatres constructed during the period, only the Tennessee and one other theatre in Birmingham, Alabama still survive; and

WHEREAS, the Tennessee Theatre was saved from demolition in 1981 by Mr. James A. Dick and Dick Broadcasting of Knoxville, who purchased the facility and completed some renovations prior to the 1982 World's Fair. On April 1, 1982, the Tennessee Theatre earned the distinction of being officially listed on the National Register of Historic Places; and

WHEREAS, once again the scene of wonderful musical performances, the 1980s found the Tennessee Theatre with two new tenants, the Knoxville Symphony Orchestra and the Knoxville Opera, as the City of Knoxville encouraged a revitalization of downtown; and

WHEREAS, a group of local citizens, united in their love of the great facility, banded together in 1996 as the Historic Tennessee Theatre Foundation, led since its inception by President Bruce Hartmann; this exemplary organization undertook the tremendous task to upgrade the theatre to meet modern requirements while also restoring its magnificence and beauty when the facility was deeded to them by Mr. Dick in 1997; and

WHEREAS, designated the official State Theatre of Tennessee in 1999 by the 101<sup>st</sup> Tennessee General Assembly, the Tennessee Theatre gained strong support throughout the community and across the state as the Foundation worked tirelessly to raise more than \$20 million from individuals, foundations, corporations, and government sources to restore the theatre; more than 2,500 groups have donated funding since 1999; and

WHEREAS, raising a total of over \$24.4 million, Foundation President Bruce Hartmann led a Herculean effort to bring back the elegance, majesty and grace of the Tennessee Theatre; the funds have been put to good use in revitalizing the Grand Lobby with the five enormous chandeliers, repairing the beautiful terrazzo flooring, replacing the carpet with a replica of the original, and returning the decorative curtains and swags and rich fabrics and tassels throughout the lobby and lounge areas; and

WHEREAS, new and notable changes have been made to address modern concerns, but most importantly the installation of a passenger elevator now allows patrons with disabilities access to every area of the building for the first time; and

WHEREAS, perhaps the building's crown jewel, the Tennessee Theatre's Mighty Wurlitzer organ, originally installed in 1928, was removed during renovation and shipped to Reno, Nevada, where it underwent a ten-month long \$150,000 renovation, overhaul and upgrade. Mr. Ken Crome, a third-generation organ builder who completed the renovation, estimated that less than fifteen movies palaces in the United States still own their original organs; and

WHEREAS, with a police escort, the Tennessee Theatre's Mighty Wurlitzer organ returned to its proper home under the watchful eye and accompaniment of Tennessee Theatre restoration campaign Chairman Bill Snyder, who has also served as the volunteer house organist since 1979; and

WHEREAS, the Tennessee Theatre boasts a new reproduction of the historic building's original 1928 marquee, which is yet another essential accoutrement that Mr. Wallace Baumann, the theatre's historian, brought to life with his tremendous knowledge and details of the building that he so clearly loves and treasures; and

WHEREAS, the actions of the Historic Tennessee Theatre Foundation, its guidance and leadership have united a community through the renovation and restoration of the theatre and has ensured that generations of Knoxvilleians today and those yet to come will have the opportunity to enjoy the extraordinary Tennessee Theatre; and

WHEREAS, the Historic Tennessee Theatre Foundation Board of Directors is comprised of President Bruce Hartmann, Secretary Bill Davis, Sr., Treasurer Darlene Smolik and board members: Wallace Baumann, Bill Campbell, Betsey Creekmore, David Moon, Bill Snyder, Bob Calloway, Jenny Hines, Jim Shelby, Jan Wade, Bob Baskerville, Fred Buffum, Jonathan Winkle, Michael Combs, Marlene Kay Davis, Greg Dunn, Thomas Strickland, Mark Williams, Tracy Williams, Bruce Bosse, James A. Dick, John Fisher, Jim Haslam, II, Dale Keasling, Jim Martin, Larry Martin, Steve South, Martha Weaver and ex-officio members: Senator Tim Burchett, Representative Joe Armstrong and former Senator Ben Atchley; and

WHEREAS, community volunteers who also served on various renovation committees were: Tom Burns, Raja Jubran, Bill Davis, Jr., Ashley Capps, Doug McCarty and Becky Hancock; and

WHEREAS, through the preservation of historic properties such as the Tennessee Theatre in Knoxville, the citizens of Tennessee today and in the future can continue to benefit from the vast history our State has to offer; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED FOURTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we hereby honor and commend the members, community volunteers and

board of the Historic Tennessee Theatre Foundation on their outstanding success in the preservation and renovation of the legendary Tennessee Theatre, a true Tennessee treasure.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.